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On the Civilising Role of *Ôzassho*, the Household Encyclopedia for Divining in Premodern Japan*

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Introduction: The 'magic book' of Japan?

According to reports made twenty years ago in the early 1980s by French ethnologist J-P. Piniès and Spanish ethnologist Herminio Lafoz, there existed in the middle of the Pyrenees and the lowlands of Languedoc a secret genre of literature that was called 'the magic book (le livre magique)'. It was believed among the villagers that the book would 'bring good luck to everyone (porter chance à tout le monde)'. The book told each villager's fortune or longevity following his or her birthday, its divinations apparently cast in accordance with the movement of the Moon. The Church had long since prohibited the book's use as a gross heterodoxy. Yet, the ethnologists observed that it remained common practice at the time of their research for many local people to go knocking at the doors of the owners of such books. Unsurprisingly, those books were regarded by the authorities as the carrier of 'wicked matters (méchantes choses)'.¹

* This is a revised version of my Visiting Lecture at the Oriental Institute of the University of Oxford on 14 November 2003. I am grateful to Dr. I. J. McMullen of the University of Oxford for providing me of the chance to deliver the lecture; and to Dr. Tracey Gannon of Kyoto University and Dr. Brian Powell of the University of Oxford, for their stylistic suggestions on earlier drafts of this paper.

¹ Jean-Pierre Piniès, *Figures de la sorcellerie languedocienne*, Paris-Toulouse, éd. du CNRS, 1983. p. 70; H. Lafoz, 'El libro de San Cipriano en la Ribaborza, Sobrarbe

If asked for a definition of *Ôzatsusho* (大雑書 lit. the great book of miscellany; hereafter referred to as *Ôzassho*, in accordance with its usual phonetic expression) by anyone who is unfamiliar with Japanese history, I would begin by saying that it was a genre of printed book somewhat resembling the magic books of the Pyrenees and Languedoc. *Ôzassho* were consulted widely and seriously by many men and women regardless of their vocations, social positions, or localities. One of the characteristics in which the *Ôzassho* differs from the south European magic book is that the local authorities did not ban the use of the book. From the advantage of a modern viewpoint, it is easy to point out how 'superstitious' the contents of such books were, consisting of odds and ends from ancient and later variations of the Yin-yang and Five-element school of astrology and geomancy (陰陽五行説).

But if one observes the powerful intermediary role that the books assumed when used in a certain milieu by a certain set of people, one cannot deny their grave, but hitherto unstudied, function to stabilise as well as enliven their users' lives.

This paper focuses on the role of *Ôzassho* in making many people not only conscious of being surrounded by numerous gods, but also contented more or less with their daily modes of life. My earlier research examined the civilising role of the *Setsuyôshû* (節用集), the popular household encyclopedia that had developed from a late medieval Japanese-Chinese dictionary.² In extending the range of my discussion to *Ôzassho*, this paper tries to position the genre in the context of the lives of the Japanese in the pre-industrial era—a time when the people of the Japanese isles were less powerful, less self-confident as individuals, and more civilised than now. To give a general idea about the combined social role of these two genres of literature, one may draw an ellipse enclosing the majority of high and low societies in Japan, the *Setsuyôshû* occupying one focus, and the *Ôzassho* the other. At one end

y Somontano', *Primer congreso de Aragón de Etnología y Antropología*. Saragosse, Institución (Fernando el Católico), 1981. pp. 67–73. The above quotations are from Daniel Fabre, 'Le livre et sa magie', *Pratiques de la Lecture (sous la direction de Roger Chartier)*, Paris: Edition Payot & Rivages, 1993. pp. 237–239 [first printed by Edition Rivages, 1985]. I am indebted to Professor Tanigawa Minoru and Mr. Tanigawa Yutaka of Kyoto University for their bibliographical help.

² See T. Yokoyama, 'In Quest of Civility: Conspicuous Uses of Household Encyclopedias in Nineteenth-Century Japan', *Zinbun, the Annals of the Institute for Research in Humanities, Kyoto University*, No. 34(1), 1999, pp. 197–222. This paper was based on my lecture at Oxford on 25 November 1999.

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of the spectrum, the *Setsuyôshû* taught its users civility towards humans, in particular, formal manners in written communication. The *Ôzassho*, by contrast, instructed its readers in civility towards non-humans, in particular, the various fearful, but occasionally benevolent, gods in heaven and earth. In the course of my research uncovering and examining extant copies of these two genres during the last two decades, copies of both *Setsuyôshû* and *Ôzassho* were sometimes found in a set in the storehouse of an old family. In such cases, the current generation often told me that the old masters of the house had used *Setsuyôshû*, while their wives had favoured *Ôzassho*, or that the wives had used both—their husbands being busy outdoors.

This paper consists of three parts. Part One will be a brief account of the three-century history of the publication of *Ôzassho*. In Part Two the dominant mode of use of *Ôzassho* will be discussed, and in Part Three an assessment will be tried of the civilising role of both *Ôzassho* and *Setsuyôshû* in premodern Japanese social history.

Part One: Three stages in the history of *Ôzassho*

The history of publishing *Ôzassho* began at the latest in the early 1630s. During the following 50 years or so, more than 15 editions appeared.³ The contents of these were identical, consisting of 136 articles of instruction. They offered to the readers basic knowledge of nomenclatures used in the then solar-lunar calendar (i.e. The Senmyô-reki since AD863), and instructed them how to choose 'right' days and face 'proper' geographical directions on certain occasions in one's life. Such occasions included commencing a house construction, removing a house, holding a matrimonial ceremony, entering a school, sending for a medical doctor, wearing a new garment, or even taking a bath.

There were three stages in the history of *Ôzassho*. The first was the time of 'Old *Ôzassho*'.⁴ The second was the time of 'Enlarged *Ôzassho*', which emerged gradually towards the end of the 17th century; and the third was

³ The oldest surviving copy accessible to the public today was published in 1632, the 9th year of Kan'ei Era. It is, however, not likely that this was the first edition. A photographic reproduction of the copy was published with introductions by Hashimoto Manpei and Koike Jun'ichi under the title of *Kan'ei Kunen Ban Ôzatsushiyo*, Tokyo: Iwata Shoin, 1996.

⁴ In Japanese, *ko-ô-za-tsu-shi-yo*. This term was coined by the science historian, Professor Hashimoto Manpei.

the time of 'Encyclopedic *Ôzassho*', dating from the early 19th century.

The text of 'Old *Ôzassho*' (The title of any edition in this group was unanimously printed 'ô' in Chinese character and 'za-tsu-shi-yo' in Japanese kana) has commonly been understood to be composed of excerpts from medieval manuscripts of astrology and geomancy of the 14th century, such as *Hoki-naiden* (籠篁内伝) or *Shûgai-shô* (拾芥抄). Yet upon close examination of the details of each article as they appear in those manuscripts and Old *Ôzassho*, only a few articles of both *Hoki-naiden* and *Shûgai-shô* are really identical with those of *Ôzassho*. For the publishers of *Ôzassho*, there must have been different sources among less-known manuscripts. One of the conspicuous characteristics of Old *Ôzassho* that distinguish the book from those famous old manuscripts is the new calendar note, *Daimyô-nichi* (大明日 lit. a great bright day). To start anything on a day carrying that note in the calendar was 'tolerated' as 'greatly auspicious' even if the same calendar carried 'ominous' notes on the same day. The introduction of *Daimyô-nichi* can be regarded as a revolutionary invention to stop people's anxiety when choosing 'proper' days, as almost all the days in contemporary calendars tended to carry several contradictory notes. In addition, the frequency of *Daimyô-nichi* was as high as almost once in two days. For those who followed this sweepingly powerful note, other traditional notes in the calendar would have become meaningless. Notably, however, the extant contemporary and later calendars show that their makers kept on printing both old and new notes, and *Ôzassho* too did not avoid explanations of old notes as well. Although the word *Daimyô-nichi* had already appeared in a Japanese dictionary compiled in 1548, the explanation of the day given in that dictionary had not been such a special one.⁵ Judging from surviving copies in Okinawa of Chinese astrological books, called *Gyoku-kô-ki* (玉匣記), there seems to have been an apparently similar note in southern China, called *Daming-jiri* (大明吉日) during the 16th century. But this note was only one of fairly good days and

⁵ 20 *Daimyô-nichi* are included in *Unpo Iroha Shû* (運歩色葉集): a manuscript from the year 1571, kept at the Library of the Faculty of Letters, Kyoto University. The bibliographical study of *Hoki Naiden* by Professor Nakamura Shôhachi notes that the earliest printed version of *Hoki Naiden* (published in 1612) carried 23 *Daimyô-nichi* of a sweepingly auspicious nature. A manuscript, [*Hoki Naiden*] *Kin'u Gyokuto Shû* (金烏玉兎集), copied by Yôken kept at Yoshida Bunko, Tenri Library, Nara, carries 13 *Daimyô-nichi* with a similar auspiciousness, but the date of hand-copying is unclear. See S. Nakamura, *Noppon Onmyôdô-sho no Kenkyû*, Tokyo: Kyûko Shoin, 1985, pp. 227, 239-240, 276-277.

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did not have the sweeping character of the *Daimyô-nichi* in *Ôzassho*. One may therefore say that in Japan during the latter half of the 16th century, there was a drastic change in people's attitudes towards the calendar, and the publication of *Ôzassho* was one of the results of this process. Another notable characteristic of *Ôzassho* is that it contained an article advising individuals of a particular age against pilgrimage to the holy Ise Shrines of the Court. This could well have been considered by many commoners to be an encouragement, as they felt authorised by the book to go there, if they chose the 'proper' age for them to go. In short, the Old *Ôzassho* had in its text dubious messages between, on the one hand, the traditional sensitivity towards shades of difference among old calendar notes or other restrictions, and, on the other, a new boldness that would encourage the readers to be free from such conventional concerns. It was up to the individual reader whether to follow the old style or the new in the book.

Ôzassho in its second stage showed both consistency and change. Judging from *Mannen Ôzassho* (萬年大雜書),⁶ one of the representative contemporary editions of one-hundred-odd-page text, about 80% of the divinations of time and space in Old *Ôzassho* remained in the new enlarged edition. The explanation of the various gods, however, became not only more detailed, but was often accompanied by illustrations. Further major differences from the Old *Ôzassho* included the introduction of a list of annual events in and outside the Court (Fig. 1) and an increase in the number of articles relating to divinations about individual matters, such as how to derive an integrated view of the past and the future of a person born in a certain year, month, and day. The introduction of a number of articles on divining matters relating to pregnancy presented another change, along with a noticeable increase in the politeness of the language used throughout the text. These last two changes seem to have been reflecting the then increasing readership among women.

With these changes, the readers received a broader range of imaginative interpretations of dates and geographical directions, along with more chances to use the book for private affairs and the feeling of a newly added atmosphere of courtly elegance. Notably, however, notwithstanding these changes, the instructions about calendar and geomancy comprising the core of *Ôzassho* remained basically unchanged.

⁶ Literally, '*Ôzassho* that can be used for ten-thousand years'. This was published by Akita-ya Toku-uemon in Osaka, 1698. The kana syllables printed alongside the title in Chinese characters are: 'ma-n-ne-n-ô-za-tsu-shi-yo'.



Fig. 1. Beginning of a list of annual events depicting the new year day in the Court (the middle row, from the 1698-*Mannen Ōzassho*).

The third stage of the history of *Ōzassho* can be represented by the bulky edition, *Eitai Daizassho Banreki Taisei* (永代大雑書萬曆大成),⁷ a volume which consisted of 330 articles, printed in nearly 700 pages. The publishers boasted that this new edition of 1838 was a definitive one and it certainly sold well; reprinted in 1856, revised in 1880, and followed by many reprints well into the 20th century. For quicker and easier reference, old and new instructions were compactly arranged in a number of chapters under titles such as 'The auspicious' (Fig. 2), 'Houses and Rooms', 'Tailoring', 'Illness', 'Acupuncture and Moxibustion', 'Outing and Travelling', 'Agriculture', 'Servants', 'Trading', 'Food', 'Rituals for Deities',

'Miscellaneous', 'Geomancy', 'Health', 'Pregnancy', and 'Fortune-telling'. These chapters were followed by a number of untitled groups of articles covering physiognomy, palmistry, and 'The sacred Kannon (観音 the merciful Buddhist deity) oracles written on paper'. In addition, there were multi-page head rows (top columns) carrying explanations of the heavenly bodies and weather, including how to read divine tidings from various phenomena in the sky, carry out dream-divination, and make preservative foods. Further head-row sections covered home medicine, with a broad range from first aid for humans to aid for goldfish, a chronology of Japan, a list of annual events, and a list of mourning periods for near and remote relatives' deaths, including those of mistresses.

⁷ Literally, 'the grand *Zassho* for eternal generations, comprised of hundreds of calendars', published by Tsuruga-ya Kuhê *et al.* in Osaka, 1838. The kana syllables printed alongside the title in Chinese characters are: 'we-i-ta-i-da-i-sa-tsu-shi-yo-ba-n-re-ki-ta-i-se-i'.

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Fig. 2. Beginning of the chapter of 'The auspicious' (the lower row, from the 1856-*Eitai Daizassho Banreki Taisei*).

A careful examination of every page of this bulky *Ôzassho* reveals certain characteristics that were not noticeable in former editions. Firstly, the volume emphasized Japan's importance as a divine country, with the help of illustrations of Court rituals presided over by the members of the family of 'heavenly descent'. Some of those rituals, for example certain ceremonies for house construction, were recommended to commoners for them to perform in simplified forms. The book's message that Japan was a divine country was, however, not xenophobic in tone, aspiring instead to give Japan equal weight with India and China. Secondly, the book offered a wealth of diverse new empirical knowledge: for example, weather-forecasting based on local knowledge of the Kinai (Kansai) area, or preparations for safe childbirth, with criticism of some conventional methods. Thirdly, the readers were able to discern a strong moralistic tone in many of the topics covered in the volume. For example, the book warned against over-confidence in an auspicious divination, suggesting that individuals should exercise piety so as not to become so bold as to be morally careless. Finally, the book tried hard to explain the ratio-

nale of divinations, based on the neo-Confucian theory of universal rule—in particular in terms of balance among cosmic elements. Such theorisation was, however, not altogether easy, and many articles remained unexplained. Notably, the editor, when abandoning his efforts, emphasized the importance of suppressing any doubt and following reverentially the old way of divination. As the result of this inconsistency, the bulky book simply reinforced the whole set of traditional articles for divination, only partly offering new interpretations.

Looking back over the changes and non-changes of *Ôzassho* through the three stages over the course of three centuries, one is struck by the strong persistence of the core traditional articles—a response, presumably, to the long-lasting demand on the part of the readers for such articles. Yet, on the other hand, one can well imagine that the inclusion of a variety of additional articles, new interpretations, and an increase in the use of elegant expressions for a broader audience must have made the readers' modes of receiving messages from the book in its later stages more diverse than in the earlier stages. It remains, therefore, difficult to grasp the historical significance of the wide distribution of *Ôzassho* in premodern Japan, unless one observes the ways in which it was actually used. The following section accordingly presents the results of my examination of the wear and tear of surviving copies of *Ôzassho*, conducted during field research over the last two decade.⁸

Part Two: The dominant mode of use of the encyclopedic *Ôzassho*

The users of the encyclopedic *Ôzassho* seem to have varied to a great extent. Among the number of its copies which I came across, there were, for example, a copy of the 1842-edition used by the Ashida family of Ayabe in North Kyoto, the house of the village-head, that later produced Prime Minister Ashida Hitoshi after the Second World War, a copy of the 1856-edition used at the Office of Ode in the Court, and another copy kept in the collection of Oda Kakusai, a neo-Confucian (the Yamazaki Ansai School) scholar active in Tokyo in the early 20th century.

Based on the observation of the patterns of wear and tear of the bottom-surface of each volume, it would appear that at least five articles were consulted uniformly across those various volumes. This method was supported

⁸ For details, see T. Yokoyama, 'Ôzassho Kô—Tashin sekai no baikai', *Jinbun Gakuhô*, No. 86 (Kyoto University, 2002. 3), pp. 53–70 (Part 3).

by the fact that the lower edges of the most conspicuously rubbed pages appeared as darkish lines on the bottom-surface of each volume, and such pages carried the following articles: (1) *Rokujû-zu* (六十図 lit. the chart of sixty) (Fig. 3); (2) *Nan'nyo Aishô* (男女相性 lit. man-and-woman compatibility) (Fig. 4); (3) Physiognomy; (4) *Toshi-hakke* (年八卦 the twelve-month divination for each age in one's life); (5) *Hiden Ju-ichi Sen* (秘伝十一占 lit. the confidential teaching of eleven divinations), which, on the basis of *Toshi-hakke*, helps a person in eleven categories of affairs, including 'looking at things', 'hearing things', 'obtaining things', and 'waiting for someone', among others.

The first, the *Rokujû-zu*, was a diagram of the sexagenary cycle: the matrix between the ten cosmic elementary categories and the twelve annual signs, by which the flow of time was conceived in a cycle of sixty years, each year having a different denomination, such as *Kino-e-Ne* (甲子), *Kino-to-Ushi* (乙丑), *Hino-e-Tora* (丙寅), and so on. The form of this diagram was a circle, within which concentrically another circle of the five cosmic elementary categories (木火土金水 wood, fire, soil, metal, and water) was arranged in an endless succession. Use of the *Rokujû-zu* allowed an individual to quickly ascertain which of the five basic cosmic categorical attributes called *shô* (性) he or she had been given in accordance with the year of his or her birth, such as: *Moku-shô* (木性), *Ka-shô* (火性), *Do-shô* (土性), etc. To find one's *shô* provided the initial step to get into the world of Yin-yang school divination, as the majority of divinations in the book were based on the compatibility between one's *shô* on the one hand, and one's future partner's *shô*, or even one's intended act on the other. It seems that

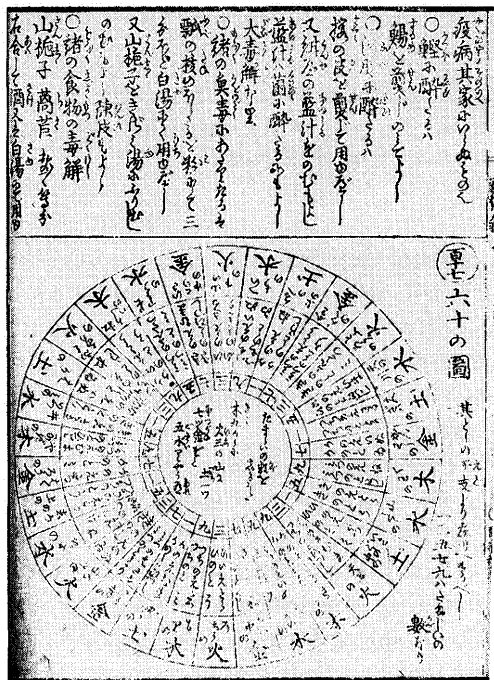


Fig. 3. *Rokujû-(no)-zu* (the lower part, from the 1880-*Eitai Daizassho Banreki Taisei*).

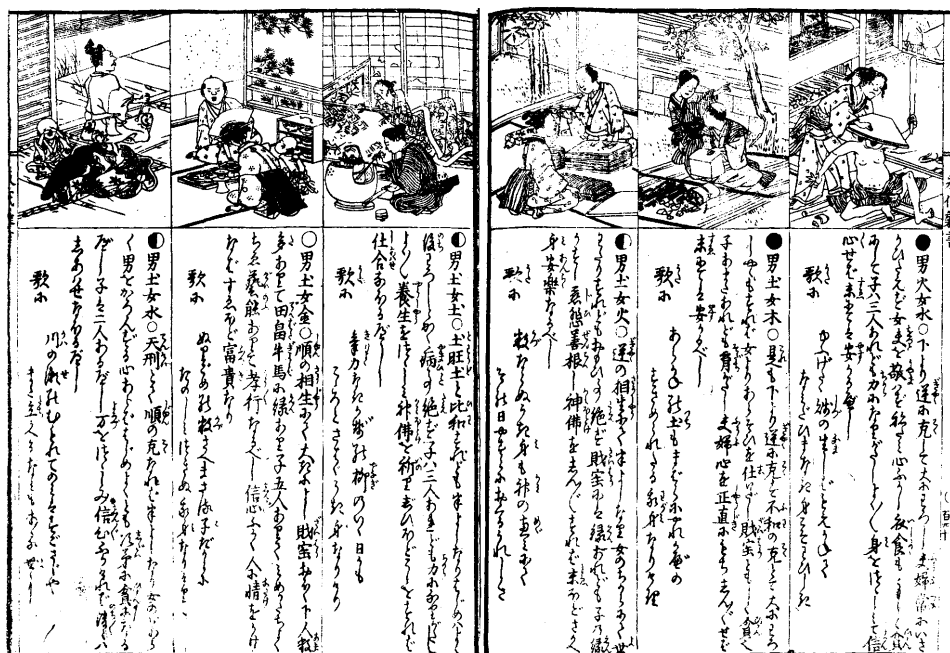


Fig. 4. Six cases of the twenty-five combinations of *Nan'nyo Aishô* (from the 1856-*Eitai Daizassho Banreki Taisei*).

somehow any act was also deemed to carry certain cosmic categorical attributes, deriving from its timing and location as well as the nature of its objective and the means to be employed. All the above-mentioned articles other than this chart of sixty, except the one on physiognomy, were examples of this way of predicting the destiny of human acts in the grand cosmic context.

From the readiness with which *Ôzassho*'s users consulted the *Rokujû-zu* and the other articles listed above, one might observe that theirs was a world in which people were commonly concerned with the year of birth as well as the facial looks of an individual. Notably, the latter were also accompanied with fairly dramatic interpretations, regarding the forehead as heaven and the chin as earth, for example (Fig. 5). Studying these major concerns, one can well imagine that the divinations thus obtained were almost always related to the degree of harmony among the elements involved, and therefore tended to give people a certain humble but comfortable sense of being small but



Fig. 5. Pages explaining the principle of physiognomy (from the 1856-Eitai Daizassho Banreki Taisei).

irreplaceable parts of the all-embracing grand cosmos.

Besides these observations of the bottom surfaces of encyclopedic *Ôzassho* that were found in public archives or local libraries, I had the good fortune of hearing how *Ôzassho* were used from a number of people who had close relationships with their former users. As such accounts seem to be crucial to understand the broad range of usages of *Ôzassho*, I would like to recount some of them here.

The first such case relates to a number of copies of *Ôzassho* published in the 1830s and 1850s which survived in a house in Noma, south of Nagoya, the once flourishing base for the shipping-trade between Nagoya and Edo (Tokyo). In the case of these texts, one could notice that alongside the conspicuous hand-stains on *Rokujû-zu*, divinations of individual's fortune, cipher-making, and man-and-woman compatibility, there were a number of fairly worn pages teaching how to choose auspicious days for going out. In Noma, as in other ports, women lived on land, managing their shipping business through paper-

work with the aid of *Setsuyôshû* and *Ôzassho*, while their menfolk on board ship faced the roughness of the sea.

The second such case arose in a small village called Hanazono, deep in the mountainous domain of the Koyasan monasteries, where a copy of *Ôzassho* published in the 1830s was found. Its most conspicuously worn pages carried instructions for users to avoid certain directions when going out on certain days. Matters of geomancy were clearly a serious issue for the local people, with many of the villagers engaged in activities in the forested areas of high mountains and deep valleys, and frequent occasions arising on which villagers became lost or did not return for a long period. Likewise, the villagers were concerned with divinations about the seriousness of illness. If a man or a woman born in a certain year became ill on a certain day, the question soon arose as to his or her chances of survival. How to answer such a question was of grave importance for the local community, as there were no medical persons nearby, and villagers needed to decide, depending on the instruction of *Ôzassho*, whether to prepare their village *kago*, the Japanese hanging palanquin, to send for a doctor from a monastery in Koyasan which stood beyond some distant mountain passes.

The third case concerns a copy of *Ôzassho* that was kept in the Buddhist family shrine of a former village family who had decided to leave the highland village of Hanazono and come down to a plain near Wakayama-city. The copy was completely worn with each of its pages torn like rotten cloths. Yet this volume preserved a hidden treasure: a rubbed manuscript made by the grandmother of the current generation which I found between its tattered pages. The grandmother was a well-known divining figure in Hanazono village, and the manuscript was her own copy of the illness divination pages of *Ôzassho* (Fig. 6). An old villager, who kindly accompanied me from Hanazono down to the house, told me that the late woman had greatly helped villagers, making herbal medicine and at times offering her predictions on man-and-woman compatibility. According to his story, she had been a devout worshipper of the Kannon, of a nearby place, with whose divine assistance she could get divinations from *Ôzassho* and give her visitors clear views about their past and future. Towards the end of such anecdotes, the old villager uttered the following words: '*Uranai no kongen wa kamisan ja* (The root of divination is god.)'.

There were many other stories accompanying copies surviving in local communities, where *Ôzassho* functioned as a sort of public institution. Several years ago, the survival of a fairly worn copy of the encyclopedic *Ôzassho*

published around the turn of the 19th century was reported by a historian of Ryûkyû University. Its location was at Hoshitate village on the island of Iriomote, in the Yaeyama Islands, south of Okinawa. The former owners of the copy were members of the Ishigaki family (石垣家), one of the prominent magistrate families of Ishigaki island, the centre of the Yaeyama archipelago. Somehow, the copy had become the property of the father of the present generation of a family in Hoshitate. The new user's reputation as a diviner had become legendary by the time I met with his son in 1998. This late father had been respected as a *monoshiri*, (lit. a well-informed person, but in Okinawa the word means a learned male diviner): one who could find missing persons or locate stolen rice hidden in a rock

off the shore; one who could cure someone abandoned to their illness by the only modern medical doctor residing on the island; one who helped islanders give their children proper names when requested. The father had treated the book with reverence, wrapping it up carefully before depositing it in the family Buddhist shrine for safe keeping, and purifying his hands with salt, whenever he took it out to use it. Its most conspicuously worn pages were the pages referring to home medicine, *Rokujû-zu*, compatible naming, divination of a person's fortune based on the year of birth, individual's luck in a certain year and month, and physiognomy.

While these examples are not in themselves sufficient for any statistical analysis, one begins to see how each volume of *Ôzassho* was interconnected with the daily lives of the members of the local community. When a user of *Ôzassho* was thought to have a special divining talent, the reading of the book

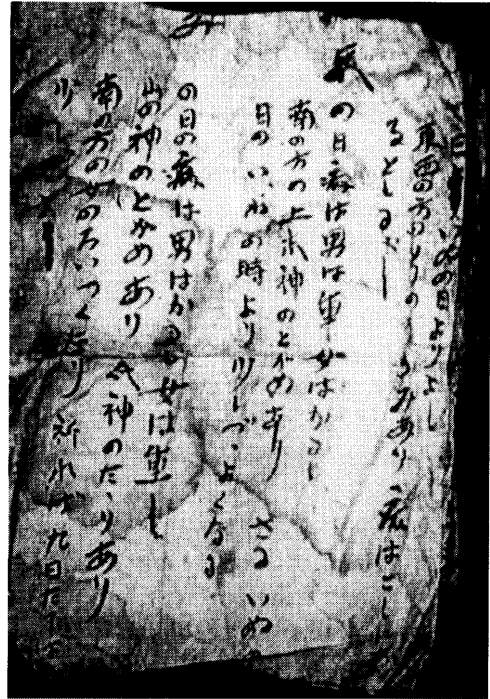


Fig. 6. Example of illness divination, hand-copied from *Ôzassho* by a diviner in Hanazono, Wakayama Prefecture.

and its consequences could be fairly serious. The inspiration and energy such persons received from the non-human world were expressed in the forms and words that were readily available in the pages of *Ôzassho*. In this sense, the book acquired a strong life-power of its own, unusual for a book, whenever functioning as such an intermediary.

It would be natural to assume, before reaching any conclusion, that a brief look at contemporary records might help one's understanding of how *Ôzassho* was used. It is, however, not so easy to find any explicit references to *Ôzassho* in the writings of contemporary intellectuals in spite of the fact that *Ôzassho* was a piece of household equipment. There are several modern word-indexes to the numerous notes, essays and diaries privately written by the literati of premodern Japan. But these indexes give no entry for *Ôzassho*. One rare case I have happened to find is in a comparatively new re-print collection of premodern private writings. It is *Kyôhō Nikki* (享保日記), the diary of Nishino Seihu (西野正府), a lower-middle class samurai of Mito. He was for some time a writing officer in one of the Edo houses of the Tokugawas of Mito. In his 17-year diary covering the early 18th century, there is one paragraph referring to *Ôzassho*: 'On the 12th, that is *Kino-to*-Rabbit day of the Rabbit month of the *Kino-e*-Dragon year, a successor sharing the family name got a boy', meaning that a grandson was born to Seihu. The new grandfather wrote: 'According to *Ôzassho*, the Rabbit day of this month is either '*Man-oku-nichi*' (萬億日 lit. the day of billion-time multiplication), or a '*Yorozu-kichi-nichi*' (萬吉日 lit. the day good for anything), or '*Ichiryu man-oku nichi*' (一粒萬億日 lit. a day that would make one seed, if planted on the day, proliferate up to billions)'.⁹ Seifu must have spent quite long hours, opening various pages of possibly plural copies of *Ôzassho*.

Another case is the diary of Yamamoto Heizaemon (山本平左衛門), a farmer samurai (*gôshi*) of Yamato Province, who had the privilege, as a family tradition, to be given, in the new-year ceremonial, an individual audience with Lord Tôdô of Ueno in Iga Province. Some parts of his annual diaries totaling 40 volumes, ending in 1720, have survived.¹⁰ It was Heizaemon's habit to write in the first page of each year's diary all the names with polite honorific prefixes that he thought he ought to keep in mind; from 'The Worshipful

⁹ *Kyôhō Nikki*, printed in the 15th volume of *Zuihitsu Hyakka En*, Tokyo: Chûô Kôron Sha, 1981. See its p. 118.

¹⁰ *Yamato no Kuni Musokunin Nikki* (大和国無足人日記), ed. Hirayama Toshijirô, Osaka: Seibundô Shuppan, 1988.

Kinjô (今上尊 Current Majesty the god Ten-nô), ‘The Barbarian Conquering Great General (征夷大將軍 Seii-Tai-Shogun)’ with his full rank and title in the Court at Kyoto, down to ‘The Honourable Local Magistrate of Furuichi’, under whose jurisdiction Heizaemon lived. About the beginning of the 18th century, he began writing in the following space of that VIP list, a list of important days of the year selected by him from current calendars. After about ten years, he began adding the annual direction of a deity called *Hyôbi* (豹尾 lit. leopard’s tail), one of the Eight Divine Generals in heaven (八将神). At that time, an increasing number of people seem to have believed that *Hyôbi* was one of the most awful gods who had an extreme hatred for contamination, and that they should avoid doing their personal toilet or keeping cattle facing the god’s annual direction in heaven. The time when Heizaemon began adding a warning note about *Hyôbi*’s direction corresponds to the period in which the enlarged *Ôzassho* was disseminated. It was in those new editions, and not in calendars, that a detailed explanation of the fearfulness of *Hyôbi* was given. Heizaemon’s diary did not explicitly mention *Ôzassho*, but one can well imagine from his diary accounts the book’s existence on his desk and the active role it played in his life.

More explicit cases have been found in a privately published family history of a house in Tete village in Tokunoshima, south of Amami-ôshima.¹¹ Although the record was not written by the contemporary users of *Ôzassho*, the author, who belonged to the next generation, recounted an unforgettable memory concerning the book. The family was believed to take care of the god of the river called Shôji-gawa in the area. In the region of Amami islands, the local name for *Ôzassho* had been *Man’nen Koyomi* (萬年曆 lit. perpetual calendar/named probably after some titles of late-17th-century editions). The family history says that its former members had been in possession for some 100 years since the early 19th century of about 60 books, including *Man’nen Koyomi*, some editions of The Book of Change, books on Confucianism. During that time each generation of the family cared for the villagers, divining their luck and dispensing knowledge of good days and good directions. At one time, they even composed a kind of single-sheet monthly poster for the community’s convenience. The record of this house tells with deep regret that the last destination of their once worshipfully treasured library was to become material for children’s kites, an incident that occurred during the 1930s, when the person responsible for the collection had to live away in

¹¹ Inoue Kinsuke, *Syôji no Senzo ni tsuite no Iitsutae*, privately printed at Naze in 1987.

Osaka. The family history suggests that there was some correspondence between the gradual decline of divining talent among the members of the family, an increasingly unstable situation in the communal life of the area, and the weakening of the life of the book.

Part Three: The civilising role of *Ôzassho*

In drawing towards the end of this paper, the question remains as to 'What was *Ôzassho* after all?' In Part One, several peculiar characteristics of the text of *Ôzassho* were pointed out. Among them, two should be re-emphasised here. Firstly, that the book was a sort of debris of fragmented East Asian popular beliefs relying on the ancient cosmic categories of Yin-yang and Five-elements that had reached Japan from the Continent from time to time, undergoing a process of selection and change and acquiring many discrepancies along the way. Secondly, throughout the long history of the publication of *Ôzassho*, there was a gradual broadening of its contents, despite the maintenance of the set of traditional instructions at its core. For example, the book gained in tinges of courtly elegance, and by the middle of the 19th century it could even accommodate ideas from neo-Confucianism, emphasising the importance of individual morality.

These two characteristics of *Ôzassho* gave its users ample freedom of interpretation and helped broaden the range and variety of the users' devotion to the Yin-yang school. Thus in theoretical respects, the *Ôzassho* was enormously flexible—showing little of the self-organising bent that results in dogmatism or orthodoxy. One may interpret this flexibility as reflecting not only the great number of gods from diverse backgrounds such as Shintoism, Taoism, and Buddhism, but also the feeble coercive political power of the Court, the traditional patron of the Yin-yang school, combined with the inconsistent attitudes of the Shogunate and local daimyo-governments towards various deities. Owing partly to its obscurity, *Ôzassho*'s divinations received criticism from a number of quarters. One can point out examples of summary rejection of divinations such as the medical essays of the early 18th century by the neo-Confucian scholar, Kaibara Ekiken (貝原益軒 1630–1714),¹² and the contemporary concise moral guide for ladies, *Jyochû Michi Shirube* (女中

¹² *Isei Shûyô* (1714), ed. Takeda Sadanao, reprinted in the 7th volume of *Ekiken Zenshû*, Tokyo: Ekiken Zenshû Kankô-bu, 1911, pp. 815–816. See also, Ekiken's manuscript, *Shinshi-roku*.

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道知辺)¹³ by an anonymous but well-informed author. One may also add the chapter 91 of the medieval *Tsure-zure-gusa* (徒然草) by Yoshida Kenkô (吉田兼好 c1283 – after 1352), of which printed editions appeared abundantly in the 17th and 18th centuries.¹⁴ The chapter was a rejection of the idea of attaching labels like ‘auspicious’ or ‘ominous’ to any day.

Notwithstanding these voices, serious intellectual criticism was slow to develop, and the voices in themselves were never sufficient to stop the publication of *Ôzassho*. Accordingly, the number of editions reached more than one-hundred by the end of the 19th century (Fig. 7).¹⁵ Yin-yang school beliefs did not decline and belief in Japan’s numerous gods persisted throughout the premodern period, even after the modernist Fukuzawa Yukichi (福澤諭吉 1835–1901)’s famous attack upon those beliefs during the period of Westernisation. As observed over the course of my study of the surviving 60-odd copies of *Eitai Setsuyô Mujinzô* (永代節用無尽蔵), the most popular bulky edition of *Setsuyôshû*, more than 90% of the volumes examined were well-thumbed in the pages carrying the abridged instructions of *Ôzassho*. In other

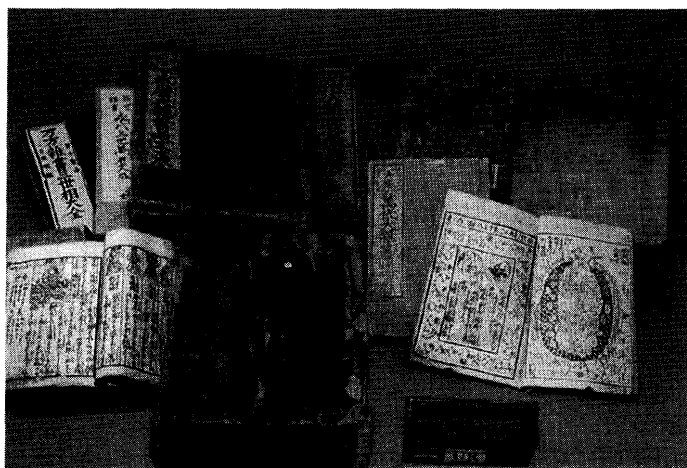


Fig. 7. Examples of *Ôzassho* published in the 19th century.

¹³ Signed ‘Mumei-shi’ (無名氏 Mr. No-name). This was published by Ogawa Tazaemon in Kyoto in 1712.

¹⁴ See Yokota Fuyuhiko, ‘*Tsure-zure-gusa wa Edo Bungaku ka*’, *Rekishi Hyôron*, No. 605 (2000. 9), pp. 1–6, 13.

¹⁵ Hashimoto, M., *Ko-Ôzatsushiyo no Bunrui to Keitô*, Himeji: privately printed, 1995, p. 1.

words, the majority of the book's users would appear to have been conscious of the invisible world in their daily lives. Even a copy from the family of one of the patrons of the popular neo-Confucianist movement, Sekimon Shingaku (石門心学), showed faint, but undeniable stains on those pages, in spite of the family's tradition of rejecting any rituals and ideas relating to the Yin-yang school. This text, found in the middle of Kyoto, seems to tell us that even the disciplined members of such a house had to pay due consideration to their neighbours' serious concerns. To answer the question, 'What was *Ôzassho*?' has thus become a difficult one, as mere analyses of its text are unlikely to yield any sufficient idea. It is therefore helpful to split the question into two, asking first, 'What was the dominant mode of use of the book?' and second, 'What was its major role in a broader social context?'

Part Two of this paper, based both on the observation of wear and tear of surviving copies of *Ôzassho* and on my field research in quest of the actual usages of *Ôzassho* in a number of places in Japan, has dealt with the first question. It has become possible to point out what were the major messages that most of the users received from the book. Among numerous articles in the book, there were in short two most popular articles that were unanimously consulted: '*Rokujû-zu*, the chart of sixty' and '*Nan'nyo Aishô*, man-and-woman compatibility'. The messages these two articles in *Ôzassho* seem to have given to their users can be summed up as follows: (a) that cosmic harmony assumed primary importance; and (b) that the quality of the combination or composition of the various elements mattered more than an individual element's quality. Together, these messages express a mode of thinking that tends to diminish the weight of individual human endeavour; a mode of thought that modern society has long since tried to deny, encouraging instead the idea of individual freedom and development. One may well imagine that a society sustained by such a harmony-oriented mentality might have been quite gloomy and inclined to stagnation, being incessantly shrunk by unfavourable divinations of the future. Yet the reality in Japan did not altogether prove so. This leads us back to the second question: 'What was the major social role of *Ôzassho*?'

Undeniably, *Ôzassho* exerted varying degrees of restraint on its users' lives. Yet on the other hand, the book empowered its users, as, for example, was the case when an act was planned to take place in accordance with the instructions of the book. The more grave or uncertain an act was perceived to be beforehand, the more energy an 'auspicious' divination by *Ôzassho* would have stimulated in the minds of the individuals looking to the book for

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Figs. 8 & 9. The Three Holy Eastern Mountains and *Jô* and *Uba* depicted in the double-page row above the colophon of the 1849-*Eitai Setsuyô Mujinzô*.

guidance. In this way, the book functioned to give its users' lives a balanced succession of acts of self-restraint (慎み *tsutsushimi*) and daring will power (張り *hari*). This may sound simple, but if one takes into account that *Ôzassho*, together with *Setsuyôshû*, were often treated as precious, or even semi-holy household objects during a time when Japanese society was comparatively stable, with more limited varieties of human activities than in modern times, it was functioning in its own way. The matter of maintaining harmonious and non-stagnant co-existence between various members in a close community was probably one of the major common concerns anywhere in Japan at that time, as can be seen in, for example, numerous family precepts (家訓 *kakun*) and local governments' moral decrees (風教令 *fûkyô-rei*). Under such conditions, *Setsuyôshû* were active in giving secular civility for smoother or energy-saving communication among humans, while *Ôzassho* served to teach civility towards non-humans. Together, the two formed a set of indispens-

able intermediaries that could connect almost all the social elements with less conflict, including real and imaginary environments, readily giving their users ‘proper’ forms, words, and world-views. Judging from the long duration of these genres of literature, they seem to have taken deep root in society, perhaps far beyond the expectations of the publishers. The majority of people in possession of these volumes, in particular the later bulky editions, seem to have felt blessed to be the owners of such books. They bore auspicious pictures in the frontispiece or in the colophon, such as Crane and Turtle, the Three Holy Eastern Mountains (Fig. 8), the divinely aged couple of *Jô* (尉) and *Uba* (姥) (Fig. 9), or Dragon and Cloud; in this way, reminding one of the reverential description of the ‘magic book’ by the Pyrenees villagers as something that would ‘bring happiness to everyone’. During my visits to the houses that kept these books, the common story often told by the current generation was that their grandfathers used to tell their sons and grandsons never to let the books leave the house.

Postscript: Flexible intermediaries between humans and non-humans

When Shikitei Sanba (式亭三馬 1776–1822), the humorist published a parody of a comprehensive *Setsuyôshû* with *Ôzassho*-appendices in the early 19th century, he seems to have been well aware of the irreplaceable roles of such intermediaries. The title of his parody was *Dôke Setsuyô: Ono ga Bakamura Usoji Zukushi*,¹⁶ which meant ‘the jocular *Setsuyôshû*: an exhaustive glossary of false Chinese characters by a foolish author misleadingly named after the celebrated ancient poet, Ono no Takamura’. The book offered columns mimicking physiognomy, palmistry, and the divination of shapes of written seals (花押 *kaô*), alongside a hilarious personal coinage of Chinese characters. Even so, the author did not in the least intend to reject those popular beliefs mocked in his parody. Rather he wished to shed fresh light upon humanity’s persistent concern with divinations and elegance in writing—in short, with the sublime, in any way, and in any degree.

Until recently, modern scholars were critical of Sanba’s satire, disappointed that his parody was lacking in the kind of revolutionary thought they had expected from his writings. On the contrary, having observed the way *Setsuyôshû* and *Ôzassho* thrived, one is bound to be impressed by Sanba’s

¹⁶ 道化節用 小野憲謙字尽, first published in 1806, reprinted in the 9th volume of *Nippon Shomin Bunka Shiryô Shûsei*, Tokyo: San’ichi Shobô, 1974.

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gift as a keen observer of the contemporary society; as an observer of a type of polytheistic civilisation, the majority of which members could enjoy the enormous flexibility with which *Setsuyôshû* and *Ôzassho* played innumerable intermediary roles. He seemed to have accepted that a stable society needed certain formalities to be reverentially, even ostensibly, shared. But at the same time, he seemed eager to send a message that members of any such society would do well to cultivate the sense of detachment that would enable them to laugh at themselves, without which society could easily become stagnant. The authorities, for their part, seem to have felt no need to suppress such a parody, being probably fully aware of the fact that no one would be injured by its publication and also possibly sensing its unintended effect of making many people recognise again the subtle but irreplaceable weight of those guide books for a sustainable mode of sharing *one world* between humans and non-humans; to use a modern expression for the latter—their environment.